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MEDICAL EDUCATION

IN

ONTARIO.

A LETTER TO THE

HON. G. W. ROSS, LL.D.,

MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

BY

SIR DANIEL WILSON, LL.D. F.R.S.E.,

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TORONTO:

ROWSELL & HUTCHISON, PRINTERS.

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MEDICAL EDUCATION IN ONTARIO.

To the Honourable G. W. Ross, LL.D., Minister of Education :

DEAR SIR,—In accordance with your request I have perused the open letter addressed by Dr. Geikie to the Honourable Attorney-General, on the subject of "Medical Education in Ontario." In reply, I must invite your attention to the broader questions which it involves.

In the remodelling of King's College, whereby the provincial endowments for higher education were transferred from the control of a single denomination, and placed on the just basis of a national system in which all citizens enjoy perfect equality, the Faculties of Law and Medicine were abolished. This revolution had already been effected when I entered on my duties as a professor, in 1853 ; but the incidents connected with it were fresh in the memory of all, and the chief actors were prominent members of the community. I had the privilege of enjoying intimate intercourse with the Honourable Robert Baldwin, and was admitted to much friendly communication with the Honourable Chancellor Blake, and with other public men conversant with the political life of the time. From the information communicated to me by them I was left in no doubt that the abolition of the Medical Faculty was largely due to the antagonism between the late Dr. Rolph and certain professional rivals : the Honourable Dr. Rolph being, at the time of its abolition, a member of the government. I was subsequently confirmed in my belief of the influence so exercised, by approaches made to me from the same quarter, with a view to the restoration of the Medical Faculty.

Fresh as I then was from Edinburgh, and familiar with the relations of the science departments to other branches of instruction in that University, I was strongly impressed with the bene-

ficial influence which an efficient Medical Faculty exerts in stimulating and fostering all departments of Science. It was, therefore, with mingled surprise and regret that I learned of the abolition of the Medical Faculty at the very time that steps were being taken to establish professorships in Science, and give to it some due share in the prescribed requirements of a liberal education. The results abundantly confirmed my apprehensions. The department of Natural History exercised slight influence on the studies of the Undergraduates; and the entire scientific work played a very subordinate part in undergraduate studies.

The counter-revolution which the restoration of the Medical Faculty effected is already abundantly apparent. The department of Natural History has expanded into an efficient school of Biology, with its related branches of Physiology, Histology, and Botany, offering to the students in Arts ample facilities, and holding out strong incentives to a thorough devotion to their study. The department of Chemistry has in like manner entirely outgrown the limited aims of earlier years; and the needful steps are being taken for providing an adequate building, with the appliances for carrying on laboratory and other work, not less important to many of the students in Arts than to those in the Faculty of Medicine. The necessity for similar provisions for the department of Geology is now urgently pressed on the attention of the University authorities; and action is only delayed till funds are available for the purpose.

The importance of Chemistry to the medical student is universally recognized. The novel bearings of Biology, in all its branches of research, on the transformation of the practice of medicine from empirical routine, to an intelligent scientific application of well-determined remedial measures to specific diseases, are now widely familiar. But even Geology, has its branch of Palæontology to which the attention of the medical student is wisely directed; Psychology, though mainly prosecuted as a branch of philosophy, has its important bearings on abnormal cerebral action, on hypnotism, and many forms of mental aberration; while Physics has now its special experimental lectures,

including the study of Electricity and Magnetism, to meet the requirements of the extended medical curriculum. In all this, instead of the work of Arts students being impeded, the necessary development of the various science departments has largely added to the facilities for their study.

In this healthful expansion every true friend of higher education in Ontario has an interest; and no class of students enjoy such important practical results as those in Arts: the Science Teachers in your Collegiate Institutes and High Schools; the Land Surveyors, Mining Engineers, the Chemical Analysts, and Druggists; the Electricians, and all to whom practical scientific training is of value. Yet all this Dr. Geikie calls upon you to reduce to the restricted and inadequate scale of earlier years, assumed to comprehend a sufficiency for students in Arts, on the plea that "it is not the duty of the state to use public funds of any kind in educating students for a special profession; any more than for any other calling by which people earn their living." What then are we to think of our Provincial Agricultural College for the scientific education of farmers; or our Normal Schools and School of Pedagogy for Teachers; or our School of Practical Science for Land Surveyors, Civil Engineers, Chemical Analysts, Architects, etc.; or a subsidised School of the Fine Arts; or a Canadian Literary Institute? Is all special professional training, with the one exception of Medicine, deserving of aid and encouragement from the state; or is it not rather beyond all controversy that there is no other department of professional training—not even that of the Teacher,—in which every member of the community has so keen a personal interest as that of Medicine? I will only say in the words of Dr. Geikie: "Our province is inhabited by sensible people who can see and judge of such matters for themselves."

Dr. Geikie next proceeds to advance charges of gross abuse, and shameful misappropriation of University funds.

1. The Legislature having voted \$160,000 in aid of the restoration of the University buildings, after the disastrous fire of February 14th, 1890, Dr. Geikie says: "It may appear in-

credible, but it is nevertheless true, that at this very time, or almost immediately afterwards, other extensive and very costly buildings were contracted for and pushed as rapidly forward as possible. . . . Most unquestionably the Legislature of Ontario, which had hastened to vote \$160,000 to aid in repairing the damage done by the fire, had no idea that the most of the sum so promptly and liberally voted would be at once spent in a way which was never for a moment intended, viz., on dissecting rooms," etc.

It is scarcely possible to characterize in too strong language the reckless conduct of a person in Dr. Geikie's position making to the Attorney-General a charge against the authorities of the University, which he admits to be to all appearance incredible; and yet which he obviously never troubled himself to authenticate, while pledging his word for its truth. The facts, which he might have readily ascertained on enquiry, are these: The plans for the extension of the Biological building were completed in November of the year previous to the fire; the contracts for the building were accepted, and the requisite funds appropriated by the Board of Trustees immediately thereafter, and the building was already in progress and the foundations well advanced before the fire occurred. It is scarcely necessary, therefore, to add that not a single dollar of the money voted by the Legislature has been spent for this, or any other purpose than the restoration of the buildings destroyed by the fire.

2. Again, Dr. Geikie asserts that the Biological buildings of the University are really an addition for the accommodation of the medical faculty; that their extension "was manifestly intended for medical teaching purposes;" and that "they are to all intents and purposes Medical School buildings." To this I shall offer no vague reply; but a definite statement of facts. In the east wing, first completed, there are, according to the Architect's report, about 16,000 square feet of floor space. Of this fully 12,000 square feet—or three-fourths of the whole building—are entirely devoted to the use and purposes of the students in Arts. The Lecture-room and the Elementary laboratory, which are

the only rooms that the Medical students share with those of the Faculty of Arts, have an area of about 4,000 square feet. But both lecture-room and laboratory would require to be of the present dimensions if the medical faculty were abolished. Of the thirty-eight working places in the elementary laboratory nearly all are occupied every day by the First and Second Years' practical classes of the Arts Faculty: each class numbering over thirty students. The same places are used at other hours for the practical classes in Biology and Histology of the Medical curriculum; but the latter classes are under the charge of instructors paid exclusively from the resources of the medical students' fees. I cannot imagine that any disinterested and impartial enquirer will see the slightest impropriety in the facilities provided by the University for its Arts students being also made available, within such restrictions, to the students in its Medical Faculty.

3. Next turning to the later extension of the Biological building, which Dr. Geikie affirms to have been erected from funds obtained on false pretences; and to be "to all intents and purposes Medical School buildings:" the simple fact is that the transfer of the teaching of Natural History, or Biology in all its branches, to the new building which for the first time supplied needful appliances in other respects: rendered the removal of the museum to the same building imperative. The addition of this as part of the original plan was contemplated from the first, and would have been no less indispensable had no Medical Faculty existed. So far then from the later extension of the building being for purely medical purposes, the whole main southern range was originally designed, and is now appropriated for the accommodation of the museum. Had it been possible to complete the entire building at once, the whole contents of the museum would have been safely disposed in their new apartments before the calamitous fire of 1890. But although serious damage was then done to the collection, much of the valuable contents were rescued; and with the gifts already received from many liberal benefactors, in addition to further promise of valuable contributions, it is confidently anticipated that the new Biological Museum, rearranged on the plan

now in vogue in the great German Universities, will not only be one of the most important educational museums on this continent, and therefore alike helpful to Arts and Medical students; but that it will also prove a popular and attractive feature of the Provincial University for the general public.

So far, therefore, it is obvious that one main portion of the newer building was designed and is appropriated for other than medical purposes. In a further portion of it temporary accommodation has been provided for the departments of geology and mineralogy, until a more adequate structure can be erected; and in so far as certain portions of the building are set apart for the Medical Faculty, a report was obtained from the architect specifying their estimated cost, and on the basis thus furnished, an annual rent of \$1,200 is charged to the Medical Faculty, in accordance with the report of a joint committee of the Board of Trustees and the Senate as what in their estimation "would be a just and adequate allowance" as interest for the cost of erection. In addition to this the University is credited with a further sum estimated at \$1,000 to accrue to it as "proportion of expenses of maintenance and repairs of Biological and Chemical buildings, to be refunded out of Medical Faculty funds." With those facts before you, I leave you to form your own estimate of the value to be attached to Dr. Geikie's statement of what even he acknowledges to "appear incredible," but which he gives you his solemn assurance "is nevertheless true!" I observe that the letter is signed by its author in his official capacity as "Dean of Trinity Medical College," and that he professes to speak in the name of the Faculty. "To the Government and to the Legislature," he says, "we continue to look for redress." Although I have only now obtained sight of the letter, on its being forwarded by you to me with the request for a reply to its grave charges, including that of fraudulent misappropriation of public funds, obtained on false pretences: yet I observe by the date that the letter has been in circulation unchallenged for upwards of two months. Can it be possible that the respectable body of medical gentlemen constituting the Faculty of Trinity College

are willing to share the responsibility of such reckless and unfounded assertions as I have quoted from the letter addressed by their Dean to the Attorney-General ?

One further point remains to be noted. Under a University Statute, confirmed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, all fees paid by medical students are apportioned to the Medical Faculty. In the interpretation of this statute, fees paid by students for Physiology, Chemistry, and Biology, have been treated as "fees paid by medical students," and this Dr. Geikie denounces as "an abuse worthy of Ottawa!" In reality out of this fund, derived entirely from fees paid by the students in the Medical Faculty, the following expenses are met: viz., the instruction in Practical Chemistry for medical students in their first year; the special medical Chemistry for students of the second year; the Zoology for those of the first year; and the Histology for those of the second year: all this being instruction specially designed and adapted for medical students. On the other hand the Medical Fund has not hitherto been charged with any payment for the medical students who avail themselves of the didactic lectures in Physiology; nor for such lectures in Chemistry—apart from Laboratory work,—as they share in common with arts students; as these lectures involve no more than the occupation by the medical student of a seat in the lecture-room; and lead to no addition to the cost which the University would have to incur for the students in arts, if no Medical Faculty were in existence. Again, out of the same medical fund, derived exclusively from the fees of the medical students, such charges are met as those incurred in the purchase of microscopes and other instruments for scientific research, and for furthering the experimental basis of Pharmacology and Therapeutics. The restoration of the Medical Faculty has largely increased the amount of work devolving on the science professors, but none of the fees accrue to themselves in remuneration for the great addition to their labour and responsibilities. It is the source on which they draw for the purpose of extending and elevating the teaching of Medical science. For example, on the recom-

commendation of the Medical Faculty, the Senate has approved of the appropriation out of their fund of \$1,000 to defray the expense of a practical course of Bacteriology, to be given during the current year by Professor Ramsay Wright, after his ordinary duties are over. This course of post-graduate instruction in one of the most important branches of Medical science will occupy the greater part of each day throughout the month devoted to it, and will be available to all members of the medical profession. The appropriation above named is required solely for needful appliances for the course. The services of the professor are voluntary given, without remuneration.

That some readjustment of some of the arrangements heretofore adopted in reference to the special medical fund may commend itself to your judgment, under present circumstances, is possible. But the devotion of fees paid by medical students for instruments and other appliances indispensable for the furtherance of scientific research in its special application to medicine; or for such courses of lectures as those of the Professor of Biology—though his salary is derived solely from the University endowment, and not from the medical fund,—to form the requisite means for such post-graduate work as I have described, can scarcely suggest to any unbiased mind the idea of a misappropriation of University revenue.

It is inevitable when any great public improvement on existing systems is inaugurated, that the old Ephesian cry of "our craft is in danger!" should anew be heard. The old profitable venture is not only claimed to be a vested interest, but is unblushingly maintained to be ample for all requirements; if not, indeed, incapable of improvement! Dr. Geikie repeatedly refers to "our self-supporting Medical Colleges," confidently affirms that they satisfy all requirements of medical education; and as he takes on himself to say, "as is abundantly proved, do the work as well as it can be done!"—"provide and equip every building they require at their own cost, which answer perfectly all the purposes of the highest and best medical education given in any part of the Empire!" I accept these, and similar statements

of Dr. Geikie, as made in good faith. Marvellous as they are, I assume that he believes them all. But if so, they show how little conception the Dean of Trinity College has of the requirements of a well-equipped Medical School. I have repeatedly had letters from old students who, after beginning their medical studies at one or other of the Toronto Medical Schools, have gone to one of the great schools of Europe; and their expressions relative to the contrast between the inadequate and petty provisions in the little buildings alongside of our Toronto General Hospital; and the ample appliances they found available for them at Edinburgh, London, Paris, or Berlin, would furnish an amusing commentary on Dr. Geikie's self-complacent estimate of his school. Why sir, the Edinburgh Hospital, with its Clinical Lecture-Rooms, Operating Theatres, etc., covers a larger area than many Canadian villages; and alongside of it stands the amply equipped University buildings devoted to the departments of Science and Medicine: including Biology, Physiology, and all the branches of science which now contribute so largely to the transformation of medicine into scientific, instead of mere empirical treatment of disease.

In truth the great evil of the multiplication of such "self-supporting" Medical Schools is that their pecuniary interests are in conflict with the necessary expansion to embrace the important new applications of modern science. Dr. Geikie speaks of the University of Toronto as a keen competitor with such schools for students; but the entire record of the University in its efforts to set a higher standard for its Medical Degrees proves that it voluntarily adopted and adhered to requirements which greatly reduced the number of candidates willing to encounter the severe conditions it imposed. At the late meeting of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, Dr. Bergin, as convener, presented the Report of a Committee appointed the previous year "to communicate with the authorities of the Canadian and English Universities and Medical Colleges, and obtain their views as to the necessity, if any, for a higher standard of preliminary and medical education." Important changes, based on this report were sought to be introduced into the curriculum; and on the

persistent urgency of Dr. Geikie and others to defer its discussion, and to adjourn all consideration of its recommendations, Dr. Bergin—the originator and active promoter of this effort at elevating the standard of medical education in Ontario; after urging that, whether designed or not, the postponing consideration of the Report, as proposed, till next session would be to kill it for years to come;—is further reported as saying:—

“I feel that we have too many Medical Schools; and I feel that all the opposition that we have to attempts to advance the interests of the medical profession of this country comes from the schools; and if they desire it, and continue in this course, the result will be that the profession will as one man rise up and demand that the School Men be excluded from this Council because of their opposition to every advance in medical and preliminary education.”

When, in 1887, the Legislature restored to the University of Toronto its Medical Faculty, its authorities were most anxious to prevent, if possible, the multiplication of schools; and it is important that you should know that precisely the same invitation to co-operate in the revival of the Medical Faculty was extended to the Trinity and to the Toronto Medical School. Dr. Geikie refers to such a combination of forces as was thereby aimed at for the creation of one efficient Medical School, as an attempt at the impossible; and in doing so incidentally admits the fact that such a union was freely offered to him and his colleagues. Addressing the Attorney-General, he says: “You speak of ‘Union of Colleges;’ and this was suggested in 1887; but Medical Colleges large enough to require the services of a complete staff of Professors and other Teachers, can no more be rolled together than can large congregations, or public schools; and it is never wise to attempt the impossible!” The remark only furnishes another proof of Dr. Geikie’s failure to comprehend the condition and requirements of a thoroughly equipped medical school. In reality the united school would have been small in comparison with any of the great schools of Europe. That of Edinburgh, for example, numbers fully 2,000 medical

students. The co-operation of the ablest men in both schools, superadded to the resources of the University and its efficient staff of instructors in Science, would have hastened the development of what—unless the Legislature of Ontario yield to the misrepresentations of interested and unscrupulous defamers, and strangle it in its cradle,—is destined I confidently believe, to become one of the greatest Medical Schools on this continent.

How far the proposition for united action on this new and comprehensive basis was fully considered and dealt with by the members of the Faculty of Trinity Medical College I have no means of determining; but of Dr. Geikie's action, and of the motives that guided him, we are left in no doubt. In his letter to the *Globe*, of date March 23rd, 1887, he says: "I think it will be ample time to give the subject full consideration when we learn that the Government of Ontario, with the cordial support of our Provincial Legislature, has fully decided to create, equip, and endow liberally, a new medical teaching body; and to provide for it a staff of the best teachers the country can furnish, each of whom shall have a salary secured to him of not less than \$2,000 a year for each of the principal chairs; and a suitable retiring allowance when, from age or ill-health, he is no longer able to discharge his duties. Till this is done the project is a mere 'castle in the air.' When it has assumed this tangible form I am quite sure 'Trinity Medical School' will accord to it a most careful and respectful consideration."

I leave, Sir, to yourself and to the Attorney-General, to judge how far this avowal of the Dean of Trinity Medical School in 1887, harmonizes with the "disinterested" protest of the same person in 1891, against the application by the state of public funds of any kind in promoting medical education. It is sufficient for me to invite your attention to the evidence I have adduced to show that while by the co-operation of the instructors of the University Medical Faculty with the Professors and Lecturers in Arts and Science, enormous advantages are secured to the Medical Students of Ontario; and they have for the first time opportuni-

ties placed within their reach that heretofore had to be sought in British or Foreign schools: yet so far as the instruction pertains to strictly medical subjects it constitutes no charge on the funds of the University.

I have the honour to be, dear sir,

Yours respectfully,

DANIEL WILSON.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO,
February 22nd, 1892.

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